

# ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION

No. 93

## STATE OF NEW JERSEY

218th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 15, 2018

**Sponsored by:**

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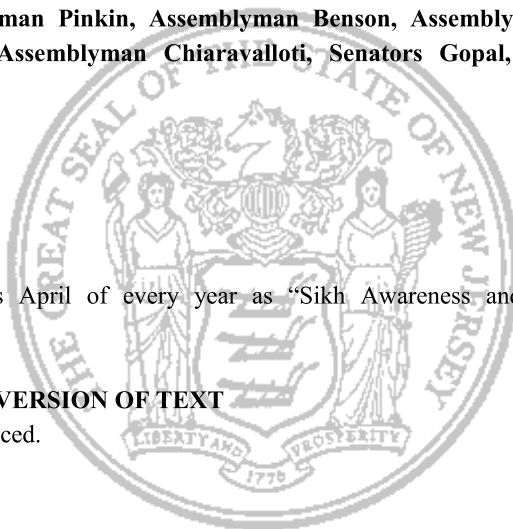
**Assemblywoman Pinkin, Assemblyman Benson, Assemblywomen Jasey, McKnight, Assemblyman Chiaravalloti, Senators Gopal, Gordon and Greenstein**

**SYNOPSIS**

Designates April of every year as "Sikh Awareness and Appreciation Month."

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 3/27/2018)

1   **A JOINT RESOLUTION** designating April of every year as “Sikh  
2    Awareness and Appreciation Month.”

3

4   **WHEREAS**, New Jersey is enriched by the diversity of its residents,  
5    who have cultivated a climate of social tolerance and intellectual  
6    pluralism that has sustained this State throughout its history; and

7   **WHEREAS**, The Sikh community, which originated in Punjab, India  
8    and began immigrating into the United States over 100 years ago,  
9    has played an important role in developing this country and this  
10   State; and

11   **WHEREAS**, Sikhism is the world’s fifth largest religion with nearly 30  
12   million adherents, including roughly 500,000 in the United States;  
13   and

14   **WHEREAS**, Founded by Guru Nanak in the 15th century, the Sikh  
15   monotheistic tradition teaches its adherents to practice the universal  
16   principles of truthful living, service to humanity, and devotion to  
17   God; and

18   **WHEREAS**, Believing that every human being, regardless of race,  
19   gender, or creed, is equal in the eyes of God, Sikhism emerged as a  
20   pioneer of social justice, with female participation in religious  
21   ceremonies widely encouraged and inter-faith efforts to fight  
22   oppression regularly pursued; and

23   **WHEREAS**, The religion’s emphasis on loving service to humanity also  
24   inspires Sikhs in New Jersey to make lasting social contributions,  
25   such as providing free food to the less fortunate through the annual  
26   “Let’s Share a Meal” event in Camden and Jersey City; and

27   **WHEREAS**, Despite their progressive principles and charitable deeds,  
28   the American Sikh community commonly experiences  
29   discrimination, often by individuals who are unaware of the beliefs  
30   and practices of the faith; and

31   **WHEREAS**, Nearly 60 percent of Americans admit to knowing nothing  
32   about the religion or its practitioners, and national rates of anti-Sikh  
33   bigotry rose dramatically following the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist  
34   attacks; and

35   **WHEREAS**, Sikhs disproportionately experience school bullying, with  
36   estimates indicating that over 50 percent of all Sikh children, and  
37   roughly 67 percent of turbaned-Sikh children, endure physical or  
38   verbal abuse while at school; and

39   **WHEREAS**, New Jersey is no stranger to this abuse, as a Sikh student’s  
40   turban was set on fire by a bigoted classmate at Hightstown High  
41   School in 2008; and

42   **WHEREAS**, Deadly assaults against the Sikh community, such as the  
43   hate-inspired murder of six worshippers at the Sikh Gurdwara of  
44   Wisconsin in August 2012, have also become all-too-common  
45   occurrences across the country; and

46   **WHEREAS**, Although the Sikh American community continues to  
47   peacefully overcome each attack on its cultural identity, the State of  
48   New Jersey is now compelled to promote public awareness of the

1 Sikh faith and memorialize the lasting contributions of its Sikh  
2 residents; and

3 **WHEREAS**, Because Vaisakhi, an annual festival that is held in April to  
4 commemorate the creation of the Khalsa Panth, a fellowship of  
5 devout Sikhs, is one of the most important Sikh holidays, it is all  
6 together fitting and proper for New Jersey to designate the month of  
7 April as “Sikh Awareness and Appreciation Month” in order to  
8 celebrate its Sikh community and combat anti-Sikh bigotry; now,  
9 therefore,

10  
11 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the  
12 State of New Jersey:

13  
14 1. The month of April of every year is designated as “Sikh  
15 Awareness and Appreciation Month” in the State of New Jersey in  
16 order to promote public awareness of the Sikh faith, recognize the  
17 important contributions of the Sikh community, and combat anti-  
18 Sikh bigotry.

19  
20 2. The Governor is respectfully requested to annually issue a  
21 proclamation designating the month of April as “Sikh Awareness  
22 and Appreciation Month” and shall call upon the public officials  
23 and citizens of this State to observe the month with appropriate  
24 activities and programs.

25  
26 3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.  
27

28  
29 STATEMENT  
30

31 This joint resolution designates the month of April of every year  
32 as “Sikh Awareness and Appreciation Month” in the State of New  
33 Jersey in order to promote awareness of the Sikh faith, recognize  
34 the lasting contributions of this State’s Sikh community, and  
35 combat the increasing and unacceptable levels of anti-Sikh bigotry.

36 Sikhism is currently the world’s fifth largest religion with  
37 roughly 30 million adherents worldwide, including roughly 500,000  
38 Sikhs in the United States. Founded in the 15th century in the  
39 Punjab region of India, Sikhism is a monotheistic religion that  
40 teaches its adherents to live by the three fundamental principles of  
41 truthful living, service to humanity, and devotion to God. Rooted in  
42 their basic belief in universal equality, the Sikhs also emerged as  
43 pioneers of social justice, with female religious participation widely  
44 encouraged and inter-faith efforts to combat injustice regularly  
45 pursued.

46 Acting on the basis of these principles, Sikhs are known to make  
47 lasting and meaningful social contributions wherever they reside.  
48 For example, Sikh communities in Jersey City and Camden hold an

1 annual “Let’s Share a Meal Event” to provide free meals to the less  
2 fortunate.

3 Despite their progressive beliefs and charitable deeds, Sikhs in  
4 the United States often experience discrimination. Following the  
5 September 11th terrorist attacks, anti-Sikh bigotry increased  
6 dramatically throughout the United States, as many people  
7 erroneously associate the Sikhs’ uncut beards and traditional  
8 turbans with religious radicals such as Al-Qaeda. Sikh students  
9 endure school bullying and hate crime assaults at a higher rate than  
10 many of their classmates. However, by refusing to respond with  
11 hate or violence, the Sikh community continues to promote love and  
12 peace in the face of discrimination.

13 In designating the month of April as “Sikh Awareness and  
14 Appreciation Month, this joint resolution aims to fight back against  
15 anti-Sikh bigotry by celebrating the lasting contributions of the Sikh  
16 people and acknowledging the essential role that Sikhs play in New  
17 Jersey’s diverse community.